

Teacher's Introduction to Galen

"Galen was born in Pergamum in Asia Minor in the year 131 C.E. After receiving medical training in Smyrna and Alexandria, he gained fame as a surgeon to the gladiators of Pergamum. He was eventually summoned to Rome to be the physician of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius. Galen spent the rest of his life at the Court writing an enormous corpus of medical works until his death in 201 C.E."

"Taking Hippocrates' notions of the humors and pathology, Galen incorporated the anatomical knowledge of noted Alexandrians such as Herophilus of Chalcedon (335 B.C.E. – 280 B.C.E.). A supporter of observation and reasoning, he was one of the first experimental physiologists, researching the function of the kidneys and the spinal cord in controlled experiments."

"Galen's works in many ways came to symbolize Greek medicine to the medical scholars of Europe and the Middle East for the next fifteen centuries. His message of observation and experimentation were largely lost, however, and his theories became dogma throughout the West. In the mid-16th century, however, his message that observation and investigation were required for thorough medical research began to emerge, and modern methods of such research finally arose."

Source: Excerpted from "Galen" (http://www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/greek/greek_galen.html). In *Greek Medicine: "I Swear by Apollo Physician..."*: *Greek Medicine from the Gods to Galen*, (http://www.nlm.nih.gov/hmd/greek/greek_rationality.html) an online exhibition by History of Medicine Division at the National Library of Medicine

1. What was Galen's contribution to the traditional Western medicine?
Galen built on other ancient Western physicians' work, which became dogma for Western medicine beyond the 16th century. His focus on observation and investigation for medical research also emerged to give rise to modern research methods.
2. Asia Minor was an important center of Hellenistic thought and culture after Alexander the Great. To see where Galen lived, studied, and worked, answer questions on the Asia Minor Map handout based on your reading of the map.
[See Teacher's Asia Minor Map.](#)